

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence

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7 April 1972

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 1500 EST)DOS review
completed

1. Communist activity has increased sharply in Military Region (MR) 4. The Communists launched a widespread coordinated series of ground probes and shelling attacks on government positions in five delta provinces on 7 April. These actions were coupled with enemy sapper attacks on several key highway bridges. Late reports indicate that the Communists have overrun Kien Thien district town in Chuong Thien Province, and that several outposts were under heavy enemy attack further north in the Vinh Long - Sa Dec area.

2. US pilots have sighted a regimental-size Communist force about 20 miles northwest of My Tho, in the same area that [redacted] had reported substantial enemy troop movement. To the west, another regimental-size Communist force reportedly has crossed into Chau Doc Province from Cambodia. These may be elements from either the 52nd or 101st Regiments, which are subordinate to the enemy Phuoc Long Front and which were detected in this general area some days ago. The Communists' 32nd Regiment has not been located [redacted] in several days and could also be in South Vietnam east of Chau Doc by now.

3. The enemy is also maintaining heavy pressure on South Vietnamese positions in MR-3. Press reports indicate that Communist gunners are continuing heavy shelling attacks against An Loc, the provincial capital of Binh Long Province, and are also hitting a nearby South Vietnamese artillery base. Enemy sappers reportedly have knocked out several bridges along Route 13, the key road link between An Loc and Saigon, and other late reports claim that Route 1 has been cut just west of Saigon. These attacks are probably the work of commando

25X1

elements from the Communist 429th Sapper Command, which recently infiltrated Tay Ninh Province and are now in good position to work against major lines of communications as well as South Vietnamese artillery support bases north of Saigon.

4. The US Embassy reports that some 8-10,000 refugees fled the initial 5-6 April enemy attack in Binh Long Province, a number that undoubtedly has risen sharply with the loss of Loc Ninh District. Press reports indicate that some civilians have been evacuated from An Loc, but there is no sign that the number of refugees has swelled to anywhere near that recorded for the northernmost provinces. Emergency aid is now being flown into various hastily erected reception centers around the country, but government resources may soon be overburdened, if the increased Communist activity in the delta provinces drives more refugees toward the major cities.

5. [REDACTED]

25X1

Elements from these units probably are also responsible for recent increased enemy activity in nearby Phuoc Long Province.

6. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Captured documents [REDACTED] do suggest, however, that the 7th Division elements now concentrated in eastern Cambodia may soon be headed for increased tactical activity in Tay Ninh Province. One recently captured document revealed that more forces would be provided for both ground attacks on South Vietnamese outposts as well as for street fighting. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] 7th Division forces would provide tactical support for a mid-April attack against Tay Ninh city by elements of the enemy's 9th Division.

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Military Region 1

7. Military activity remained light in the northern provinces, but there are indications that Hue may soon be the target of new Communist attacks.

[redacted] a combined rocket-infantry assault is being planned for Huong Tra District, the jurisdictional area encompassing Hue. [redacted] the Viet Cong attempted to destroy bridges both north and south of Hue on the nights of 5 and 6 April but were unsuccessful.

[redacted] engineer units have been ordered to complete work on access routes toward Hue to enable Communist armor, artillery and infantry to launch the "final battle to resolve the war."

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8. Since the fighting subsided two days ago, some Communist AAA and SAM units in the areas immediately north and south of the DMZ have been relocating to new positions to reduce their vulnerability to air attack. For this reason, there is likely to be a temporary diminution in the intensity of ground-fire. At the same time, however, a number of AAA units

9. The US Embassy in Saigon estimates that 100,000 refugees--one-third of the provincial population--have been generated so far by the fighting in Quang Tri.

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Twenty four refugee centers have been established between Quang Tri city and Da Nang under the auspices of an interministerial committee headed by Minister of State Dr. Phan Quang Dan.

Military Reason 2

10. Enemy-initiated activity in the highlands consisted mainly of rocket and mortar attacks against South Vietnamese positions. Pleiku Airfield received five 122-mm rockets during the evening of 6 April. A firebase in Kontum Province was attacked early on 7 April resulting in one ARVN soldier killed and 12 wounded. Action is expected to pick up in Kontum soon. An element of the North Vietnamese 320th Division has been ordered to destroy an ARVN position at Dac Mut with mortar fire, and an enemy logistics unit from the Communists 3 Front, which usually stays well out of combat zone, has moved 12 miles to the east, suggesting that the enemy is moving its supply lines closer to anticipated areas of fighting. New road construction has also been reported.

Viet Cong Actions In the Countryside

11. While the Communists currently are concentrating the bulk of their efforts on the big-unit contest in South Vietnam, Viet Cong military and political units also are being encouraged to increase pressure against the South Vietnamese in the villages. A number of reports [redacted] throughout the country indicate that the Viet Cong local apparatus is busy trying to take advantage of the impact on the rural population of the initial successes enjoyed by the Communist main-forces.

12. Communist agents around Da Nang reportedly are trying to propagandize the increasing number of refugees to leave government camps and return to their former homes. Undercover agents are contacting the refugees and advising them that they should come

25X1

over to the "winning" side. Communist cadre in other parts of Quang Nam Province also apparently are working hard to spruce up their local political organizations in outlying hamlets and villages. Emphasis is being placed on organizing support among minority and special interest groups that may now be having doubts about the ability of government security forces to protect them.

13. Farther south in MR-3, enemy cadre in a Communist command northwest of Saigon reportedly have been given instructions to strengthen local Viet Cong political organizations there by recruiting students and individuals with family members in the government's armed forces.

these people are now likely to be more vulnerable to Communist overtures for support while South Vietnamese units are under attack and suffering heavy losses.

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14. In the delta, enemy cadre reportedly are forming "special action teams" to help penetrate and overrun more government outposts. An enemy provincial directive authorizing the formation of the new teams stated that the capture of government outposts was an important part in disrupting the government's pacification program. The destruction of the program the document claimed would provide the necessary "springboard for a general offensive." In Kien Phong Province, Viet Cong cadre reportedly have been instructed to step up their efforts to organize subversive organizations in government areas to help launch a general uprising campaign at some future unspecified date.

15. Much of the current Viet Cong activity being reported does not suggest much of a change from standard Communist procedures at the local level. The current emphasis, however, indicates that Viet Cong officials clearly hope to capitalize on the adverse psychological effects government setbacks are having

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on the local population as a result of the successes of their main force attacks farther north.

Popular Reactions

16. Communist agitation plans notwithstanding, much of the civilian population in Saigon and in other parts of the country well away from the fighting is still going about its ordinary business with very few outward signs of serious alarm. As the action spreads from one front to another, however, apprehension among civilians is growing.

17. One bit of evidence reflecting the absence of panic at least in Saigon is the fact that over the past several days the black market rate for the US dollars and the price of gold have actually dropped slightly. Pro-administration politicians remain publicly optimistic. Lower House Speaker Can was quoted in the semi-official press yesterday asserting that the South Vietnamese army is holding the line in Quang Tri and that only US air support was needed to defeat the enemy.

18. At the same time, many leading figures in the capital are voicing increasing concern. Leading Buddhist Senator Mau, whose strongest support is probably centered in the northern provinces, expressed fear that Quang Tri City is "doomed" and Hue might prove impossible to hold. Another politician who has long been a caustic critic of the Thieu regime, Senator Chuc, charged that the military situation was not as disturbing as the lack of political leadership being provided by the government. In Quang Ngai Province, in southern Military Region I, local Buddhist notables are "extremely concerned" about enemy attacks further north. The monks reportedly are supporting the expansion of an organization among local high school students aimed at preventing Viet Cong infiltration of student bodies or of Quang Ngai City. Any relevant information will be turned over immediately to province security authorities for action.

19. So far, however, most Vietnamese are still watching the situation carefully and there does not appear to be any popular groundswell of sentiment either for or against the government as a result of the war news.

Enemy Supply Shipments

20. During March the flow of supplies through the Communist logistic network in the southern Laotian Panhandle remained at a very high level. [redacted]

[redacted] more than 5,500 tons of supplies moved through the Ban Phone area in March. The cargo included at least 1,900 tons of rice, 1,000 tons of ordnance, and 1,100 tons of gasoline. The ordnance deliveries in March increase the amount of arms and ammunition moved to that area since 1 February to at least 3,800 tons, most of which is probably for support of major offensive campaigns in the B-3 Front and COSVN sectors.

21. The extremely large volume of gasoline shipped is sufficient to maintain a major transport effort in the southern Panhandle and northern Cambodia well into the wet season.

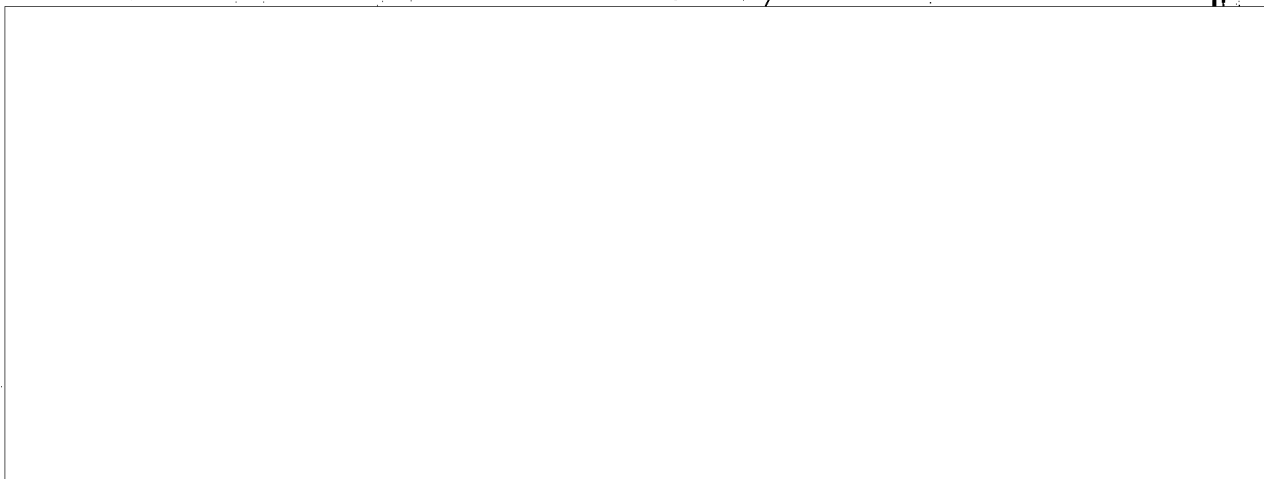
22. [redacted]

[redacted] the North Vietnamese will continue to move large quantities of supplies through the Laos Panhandle at least through April. [redacted] the results of the third day of April, which it called the [redacted] month of the "General Transportation Offensive." This use of the term [redacted] may indicate that the North Vietnamese plan to move more supplies during April than in any of the three previous months of the offensive.

In North Vietnam

23. The North Vietnamese 325th Division is apparently moving south from the Hanoi area to supplement Communist

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